

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 19.07.2016

New Poll Finds 75% of Public Seeks Automatic Anonymity for 'Revenge Porn' Victims

A new poll released today by the Centre for Gender Equal Media at Durham University and ICM reveals that three-quarters (75%) of the public agree that the Government should introduce automatic anonymity for all victim-survivors of so-called revenge porn.

Many victim-survivors and support organisations are seeking anonymity to encourage victim-survivors to come forward to report the crime and to prevent further harm and re-victimisation by further distribution of the images and/or videos. The police report that prosecutions are few because victim-survivors withdraw support, often through fear of further publicity.

The Government has rejected calls to change the law to grant automatic anonymity to victim-survivors, but experts at the Centre for Gender Equal Media and others are hopeful that the new Government will reconsider this issue and strengthen the law to support victim-survivors.

The Government has accepted that complainants of sexual offences, female genital mutilation and most recently forced marriage are more likely to report and support prosecutions if granted automatic anonymity. The same logic applies to all cases of so-called revenge pornography.

The poll results endorse the *Strengthen, Secure, Support* campaign by the Centre for Gender Equal Media focussing on image-based sexual abuse ('revenge porn') which aims to strengthen existing legislation, secure justice and provide support for victims.

Professor Clare McGlynn of Durham University says:

'Automatic anonymity for all victims of image-based sexual abuse is vital in the interests of justice to ensure increased reporting and prosecutions. We know that victims are reluctant to report this pernicious crime to the police because they fear their images or videos going viral on the internet.

The focus of the law must be on the harm to victims, not the motives of perpetrators. Image-based sexual abuse is a form of sexual exploitation and abuse and victims deserve our support and protection.'

Rt Hon Maria Miller MP, Chair of Parliament's Women & Equalities Select Committee says:

"Thousands of people have reported being a victim of Revenge Pornography in the past year yet just a handful of cases result in criminal convictions. Too often the victims say they can't face the prospect of their case coming to court. If victims were

able to seek anonymity, as is the case with sex offences, it is clear that more perpetrators would be brought to justice."

The Centre for Gender Equal Media is also calling for further reform:

- to strengthen the law to cover all cases of non-consensual sharing of private sexual images, not just those where the perpetrator intends to cause distress; and
- to support victims by calling on Government to provide sustainable financial support for organisations working to support victims including the Revenge Porn Helpline, the National Rape Helpline, the Domestic Violence Helpline and local domestic violence services and rape crisis centres.

Notes for Editors:

1. 2048 people were surveyed over the weekend by ICM. The question was: "Victims of so-called revenge pornography should have the same right to anonymity as victims of other sexual offences." The poll was commissioned by the Centre for Gender Equal Media at Durham University.
2. Survey results: 72% male, 77% female agree or strongly agree - average 75%
3. Contact: Professor Clare McGlynn, clare.mcglynn@durham.ac.uk @McGlynnClare
4. Clare McGlynn is a Professor of Law at Durham University and an expert on laws relating to 'revenge pornography'. She worked closely with MPs, Government and voluntary organisations to introduce the new laws in England & Wales, and Scotland, to criminalise 'revenge pornography'. She co-founded the Centre for Gender Equal Media at Durham University. Further info: <https://claremcglynn.com>
5. The current law criminalises the non-consensual distribution of private, sexual images where there is intention to cause distress to the victim: section 33 of Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. This law does not provide for automatic anonymity for all complainants.
6. The Home Office has rejected calls to reform the law and extend automatic anonymity to all complainants of image-based sexual abuse: Letter from Karen Bradley MP to Alistair Carmichael MP 30 June 2016, available at: <https://claremcglynn.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/gov-pcb-anon-ltr-to-libdems-30-june-2016.pdf>
7. All complainants of sexual offences are entitled to lifelong automatic anonymity under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992.
8. The Centre for Gender Equal Media has launched a campaign - *Strengthen, Secure, Support* – focussed on image-based sexual abuse ('revenge porn'). For further info, see: <https://claremcglynn.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/gem-anonymity-campaign-briefing-online.pdf>
9. The term 'image-based sexual abuse' includes 'revenge porn' but also covers all cases of non-consensual creation and/or distribution of private, sexual images. For more info, see briefing at: <https://claremcglynn.com/2016/07/01/new-research-briefing-on-image-based-sexual-abuse/>
10. The Centre for Gender Equal Media at Durham University is a new university think-tank generating evidence and policy ideas to work towards a gender equal media. Founded by a partnership of leading academics and policy-experts, GEM's aim is for a democratic media, open to all. Further information available at <http://genderequalmedia.org.uk>